

# Six tips for managing your professional online profile

Professional online profiles are part of the toolkit of everyday life. You may have one (or more) and your services users may have one too. Here are six tips distilled from **Matt Holland's** experience of creating and maintaining a number of profiles over time.



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## 1 The biography

The two watchwords for your biography are 'relevant' and 'short'. The readers of your professional profile don't know you. They only need to know what is relevant to the message you want to convey. The biography isn't you, it's what you choose to reveal to others about your professional or research interests. The true communication professionals who inhabit LinkedIn, the top influencers, are good models of the effortless biography. In fact they are so good they reveal the clunky, the unnecessarily detailed and over claiming by comparison. Writing should start with the present – who you are now, where you work, what you do. Reflect back on your previous career, briefly. Identify your interests with an eye to who you want to read your profile and what you want to convey. Talk very briefly about your achievements, highlights and current projects. Depending on your career stage, you may include higher education and professional qualifications. You might want to change the order of things once your biography is drafted. Sometimes it feels better to write in the third person – 'Matt is...'. Stylistically it avoids the great 'I am' and surprisingly it doesn't jar with the reader. Short, because you may need to get your biography in to a small space, 100 to 250 words.

## 3 Promote your profile

A profile is a selling tool for you and an information resource for those who read it. Think of all the places you might want to tell people about yourself, but it takes too long or you don't have time. The carefully crafted profile is a write once (with some editing as you go) and use many times item. Include it in your email signature. Reference it in reports and publications. Send it to people who request information about you, when you go to a meeting or present at a conference. Depending on the profile software you are using, participation in online discussions will direct people to you as your comments are automatically linked to your profile. So participate and shine. Your service

## 2 Profile picture

Photography and moving images are everywhere on the web. Images are the new killer app. The tools to make high quality images are in every smartphone user's pocket. This preface is a way of saying that people who search for professional profiles online expect a picture of you in your professional profile. Not having one sends out a message to your viewer: You can't be bothered to upload one. You are not serious about your profile. The profile is abandoned and unloved. It's irritating to the viewer to see the generic shaded person who is where **you** should be. You might include images that are jokes, cartoons or images of something else. These might mean something to you, but not to your viewer. They might mean something to your viewer that you didn't intend. Fine in social networks where you are talking to people you know well. The bottom line? In your professional profile people expect to see you. Take a naturalistic image of yourself, use it, and move on.

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Publications

Journal Article (27)

Alison Price, Matt Holland (2013) Looking at the information resources available for paramedic practice, 279-284. In *Journal of Paramedic Practice* 5 (3).  
<http://www.paramedicpractice.com/cgi-...>

Matt Holland (2012) Reference management software for students, researchers and academics, 484-487. In *Journal of Paramedic Practice* 4 (18).

users, particularly on LinkedIn, will also find you and request a connection which helps you to build a professional network. Seeking out people who you might want to include in your professional network, such as work colleagues or influencers in your organisation helps to build useful contacts.

#### 4 Hiding in plain sight

Profiling tools are designed to draw more and more information from you. Want to improve your profile? Your profile is only 85 percent complete. Really? The much-heralded admission is that it is only read by you and the potential searcher. What goes on below the bottom line of the list, computer search is rarely reviewed. However, it is a pain to reedit it, trust detail careers and qualifications and reformat the information in your biography. The real relief is personal preferences. One compelling reason to go the whole way is to make effective use of the tools and tick curriculum vitae preferences that are sometimes handed to with your profile software.



5 The metrics of everyday professional life impact a lot of the new metrics of library services. Perhaps because it really is important and perhaps because computers are good at counting and recording and software designers are good at finding new applications for the facility. How many connections in your network? How many people have viewed your profile? How many times has your name come up in a search? How many endorsements do you have? How many times have your publications been downloaded? ResearchGate has its own unique RG Score. You are being counted. But does it count? Probably not. The motivation for creating an online profile has to be a goal in your professional world. It has a virtue and purpose of its own. The various words you accrue are the outcome, not the driver, of professional engagement.



#### 6 Where to put your profile

Choosing where to put your profile depends in part on what you want to do and who you need to meet. LinkedIn is often the first choice, joining a number of library-related groups, including a CLIP group. Library and other professional groups, etc. are of the job world variety, so use LinkedIn. If you have a research interest, ResearchGate and Academia.edu give you a profile and the ability to use it as your personal repository for publications. Mendeley and Zotero have profile pages which can link to your publications and feature a Reference Management Software download. Specialist such like Covid-19, ResearchGate may be relevant if you have significant publications. The sector in which you work may be a factor. Healthcare is strongly represented in Mendeley and ResearchGate. Academia.edu is popular in universities. If you have interest in a number of areas, you may choose to maintain two or more profiles for different places.

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